Nature*Kenya*, *The EANHS — Action for Biodiversity Conservation*

Nature Net

Celebrating 90 Years

October, 1999

Membership

1087

Members
(At time of print)

WOW! WE ARE JUST ABOUT 900 MEMBERS SHORT OF OUR YEAR 2000 TARGET: 2000 MEMBERS!

Brochures and Subscription Forms available from the Office.

VIDEOS & TALKS

Nature Kenya, in conjunction with the Education, Ornithology and Audio-visual Departments of NMK, will have videos, talks, bird ringing demonstrations and guided walks on the NMK grounds over the weekend of 2-3 October. The programme will run from 9.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. on both days at Louis Leakey Hall, National Museums, Nairobi

This will be part of the events taking place during the World Birdwatch weekend. For guided birdwalks in and around Nairobi, meet at 7.00 a.m. on both days, at the NMK car park.

WORLD BIRDWATCH ROUND-UP OF ADVENTURES

Date: Thursday 14 October
Venue: NMK Seminar Room

Come and share with us your experiences of the 1999 World Birdwatch event. Tea and cakes will be served at 4.30 p.m.

All are welcome!

COMMITTEES

IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS

EA Region learns from Kenya's Site Support Groups

Report by Solomon Mwangi

Nature Kenya hosted Site Conservation Officers from Ethiopia Wildlife and Natural History Society, Wildlife Conservation Society of Tanzania and Nature Uganda last month. The Officers visited Kenya's Site support Groups (SSGs) working in priority IBAs in Kenya. The exchange visit was aimed at giving them some exposure to help them set up similar groups in their countries. They visited three sites:

Kikuyu Escarpment Forest: The forest is 30km north north-west of Nairobi. The main forest block lies on either side of the Kamae-Kieni-Thika road. The forest has a rich avifauna and is famous for hosting Abbott's Starling, Jackson's Francolin and Hunter's Cisticola. Several regionally-threatened species also occur here.

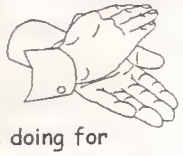
The East African Regional Team (EART) had a discussion with David Kuria, the Chairman of Kijabe Environmental Volunteers at the Gatamaiyu Fishing Camp, together with the group's Information Officer and a student active member.

Kinangop Grassland: The home of Sharpe's Longclaw, a threatened Kenya endemic, is a stretch of land bounded by the Aberdare Mts and Kikuyu Escarpment forest to the east and south and a steep scarp dropping to the Rift Valley floor on the West. The grassland also hosts Aberdare Cisticola, Jackson's Widowbirds, and often, migrating Pallid Harriers.

At Kinangop, the EART visited the offices of the Friends of Kinangop Plateau at Murungaru. They were treated to a very informative discussion on the challenges facing the grassland and the Group's vision for the future. Later, the team joined the group in conducting a Sharpe's Longclaw survey in three farms. At least 6 birds were spotted.

Kakamega Forest: This birders' paradise is the easternmost outlier of the Congo Basin forests. It lies about 40 km north of Kisumu and east of Nandi Escarpment. Two unique species here are Chapin's Flycatcher and Turner's Eremomela.

At Kakamega, the team held a very lively discussion with five members of Kakamega Biodiversity ond Conservation Tour Guides Association (KABICOTOA), and the KWS Partnership Officer of the Western Region. The team later visited Buyangu Primary School, where KABICOTOA is undertaking an environmental education programme. The team was also treated to a charming poem about the Crowned Hornbill and conservation of National Reserves.



On the whole, the EART was very impressed with what Nature Kenya, through the SSGs, is doing for birds and their conservation in Kenya.

SUCCULENTA

Meeting Saturday, 23 October

Meet at 3.30 p.m. at Mrs. Erica Mann's House no. 4, Forward Clause, off Kiti Suru rd. Please bring contributions for tea and succulents for Mrs. Mann's rockery.

REGULAR MONTHLY ACTIVITIES

WEDNESDAY MORNING BIRDWALKS

Bird watching walks at sites in and around Nairobi. Meet at the National Museum car park every Wednesday at 8:45 a.m. Return about 12:30 p.m.

Those who are not members can get temporary membership at Kshs 100 per birdwalk. Payable on arrival at the car park.

POT LUCK OUTINGS

Bird-watching outings held on every third Sunday of the month, *i.e.* 17 October. Bring a picnic lunch, binoculars, field guides, *etc.* and meet at 9:00 a.m. at the National Museum car park. Those attending decide on the venue - hence "Pot Luck".

TREE WALK

Arboretum guided Tree Walks on the last Monday of every month i.e. 25 October from 9:30 a.m. Meet at the new FONA offices beside the Girl Guides HQ.

ARABUKO SOKOKE (COAST)

FOREST WALKS-Wednesday 27 October. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the Gede Forest Station.

BIRD WALKS-Saturday 2 October starting at 6:30 a.m. from the Gede Forest Station. Organised by Arabuko Sokoke Forest Guides Association.

BUSH CRAFT: *The Wilderness Guardian*

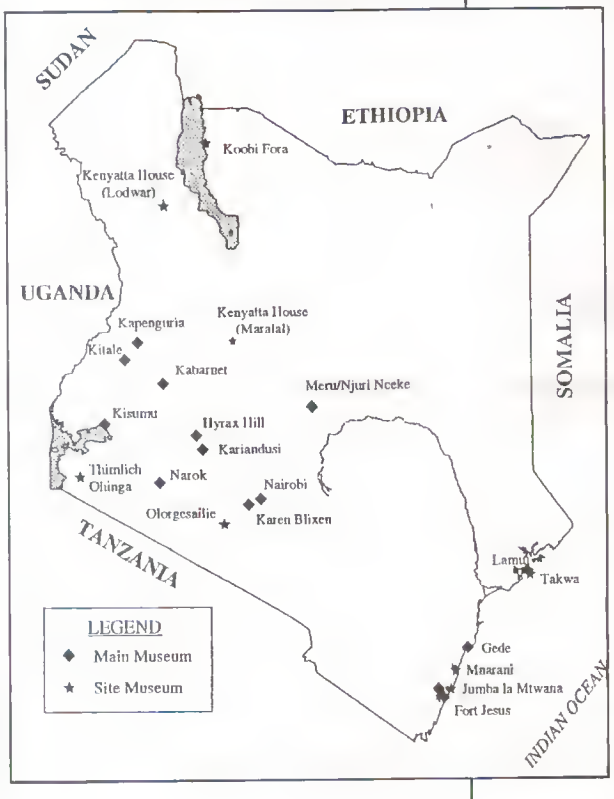
Protect the environment!

While driving off-road...do not follow exactly the same outward tracks on return journey. Tracks over fresh new growth leaves a scar all season! Best avoid off-road driving.

MUSEUMS AND MUSEUM SITES

SITES IN KENYA: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

Text by Lorna Abungu, *Map* by Dennis Milewa (Sites & Monuments)



Kenya is unique for her diversity of natural and cultural heritage. Some of the features that best exemplify this are the over 2,000 sites and monuments found throughout the country. These sites range from prehistoric (about 20 million years ago) to historic (early 20th century) and are found throughout the country from its eastern to western borders, and from north to south. Ongoing explorations in the Lake Turkana area continue to shed light on human origins, and confirm Kenya's position as the Cradle of Humankind.

In western Kenya are the marvelous stone structures of Thimlich Ohinga, dating to the 15th century AD, which bear striking similarity to the ruins of Great Zimbabwe. The World Monument Watch has now listed Thimlich among the one hundred most endangered sites in the world. Throughout the Rift Valley are numerous prehistoric settlements, such as Kariandusi, Hyrax Hill and Olorgesailie.

While there are also several prehistoric sites at the coast, notably Mtongwe just south of Mombasa, the coastal strip is best known for very different types of sites - among them are the remains of the ancient Swahili city-states that flourished between the 8th to 17th centuries AD. Most of these city-states now lie in ruins - bearing similarity to the ancient city of Pompei. Several sites are open to the public, notably Jumba la Mtwana (north of Mombasa), Mnarani (on the Kilifi Creek), Gede (south of Malindi near Watamu), and Takwa (on Manda Island in the Lamu Archipelago). Also of importance are the sacred forests, *Kaya*, which dot the coast from Kwale to Kilifi Districts. These are the ancestral homes of the Mijikenda ethnic groups who inhabit the immediate coastal hinterland.

The NMK takes the rich and diverse heritage of the country very seriously, and is constantly working to improve the infrastructure at sites open to the public, and work towards improving and opening up other sites. Many sites have camping and/or picnicking facilities, and further information can be obtained from the Dept. of Sites and Monuments, or the Public Relations Dept, National Museums of Kenya, Nairobi.

Makaya - the Coastal Sacred Forests

The Coastal Forests Conservation Unit reports that 3 more kaya forests have been gazetted recently: Bomu/Fimbini, one of the Rabai Kayas of about 400ha; Mzizima near Mombasa and Chombo in the Shimba Hills...what a conservation triumph!

WORLD BIRDWATCH '99

2 - 3 OCTOBER

I'd Rather be birding!

Join the rest of the world in birdwatching on October 2 & 3. There will be a lot of learning, teaching and guiding to do. For those who do not have specific places to go, join the guided walks starting from the National Museums, Nairobi.

The Ornithology Department, National Museums, with help from member volunteers, will have a display on birding and bird identification techniques at the museum grounds.

There will also be videos on show at the Louis Leakey Hall on both days. Members willing to volunteer or guide walks, please contact the office or just turn up on one or both days! Meet at NMK car park at 7.00 a.m.

For those who cannot find time to join the event, you can still take part by helping others take part. Make your donations to the event to Nature Kenya, offer transport or accommodate some of the participants.

ORNITHOLOGY DEPARTMENT

NATIONAL BIRDMAP CHECKLISTS And The World Birdwatch, 1999

Instructions and guidelines

On Saturday 2 and/or Sunday 3 October 1999, people in Kenya and all over the world will go 'BirdMad!'. Participants taking part in the event will be out there watching and recording birds, learning and sharing their knowledge on birds and enjoying the beauty of nature.

Information collected on such an event like World Birdwatch is very valuable. Apart from helping us build on our database system, it also helps determine the distribution of birds and improve our understanding of birds and how to conserve them.

As we go out watching and recording birds we see, it is important that the data we collect serve the purpose it is intended for. To make things easier for all of us, we have designed what we hope is a more user-friendly checklist and reviewed some general guidelines to go along with it. The guidelines are simple and straightforward (yes, really) — please follow them!

- Use one form for each site each day, watching 3-12 hours per site per day. If you watch over two days at one site, use separate checklists.
- So long as you tell us where you were (as precisely as you can), and use different forms for different places, you are free to watch birds anywhere you like!
- You can birdwatch by yourself or turn the event into a social activity — its up to you! If you birdwatch as a group, please send us the names of everyone who took part and the address of the contact person for the team.
- Record each species that you can **positively** identify.
- Record breeding status if possible and fill out a nest record card for **confirmed breeding** observations. Use the checklist for your observation records (you can transfer these from a field notebook if you like).
- At the end of the event, send us one checklist for each site and for each day you watched at a particular site. Highlight the species you recorded using a highlighter pen. Send in nest record cards for any confirmed breeding observed. Also send us your comments on how we could improve the checklist and instructions for next time.

For more details, contact the Records Officer, Department of Ornithology, NMK, P O Box 40658, Nairobi or Nature Kenya.

WORLD BIRD COUNT

Besides the records of the weekend of October 2-3, other records from the month of October may be sent in to the office to be submitted for the World Bird Count. The Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Corporation of Japan donates US$10 for bird conservation for every species seen everywhere in the world during the month of October. So let's get watching!

Acknowledgements

It is with much gratitude that we acknowledge the following donors for supporting the 1999 World Birdwatch:

- The British High Commissioner for hosting the launch
- Air Kenya for air transport
- Serena Hotels and Lodges, Sarova Hotels and Kilimanjaro Safari Club for accommodation
- Tinga Tinga for designing & printing of T- shirts available @ 600/-
- Barclays Bank of Kenya for the donation of 50,000/-
- R. Willisher, R. Mangat & H. Elkins for cash donations
- BAT for the donation of 20,000/-
- Kenya Broadcasting Corporation and East FM 91.9 for airtime
- National Museums of Kenya for website space
- V. M Browse for gifts and support
- AutoNews and Travel News for space in their magazine

Are more donations needed? YES - Sponsor a field guide for an Important Bird Area site group @ 1800/-

OCTOBER DIARY

Sat 2 World Birdwotch & AS birdwolk

Sun 3 World Birdwotch

Wed 6 Ornithology seminar & Birdwalk

Wed 13 Birdwalk

Thur 14 WBW informal talk

Sun 17 Pot Luck Outing

Wed 20 Birdwolk

Sat 23 Succulenta meeting

Mon 25 Arboretum Tree Walk

Wed 27 AS Forest & Nairobi Birdwalk

BIRD HOTLINE 749957
eanhs@africaonline.co.ke

BIRDS OF THE MONTH - CROWNED EAGLE, LESSER JACANA, MONTANE NIGHTJAR, AFRICAN PARADISE FLYCATCHER (white morph), KAREN COUNTRY CLUB, Wed birdwalk /sept.

Palm-nut Vulture, MARA RIVER & MARA BUFFALO CAMPS seen by Tristan Voorspuy /15th AUG

African Finfoot, HIPPO POOLS, Nairobi NP, Chris Hill/ Sept.

African Black Duck, Brown Snoke Eagle, Lilac-breosted Roller, NAIROBI NATIONAL PARK, Faridah Noor, Louise Fordyce, Erick Omondi, Shailesh Patel/ Sept.

Black-bellied Bustard, Speckle-fronted Weaver, Red-throated Tit, GITUAMBA FARM, KASARANI, Erick Omondi/ Sept.

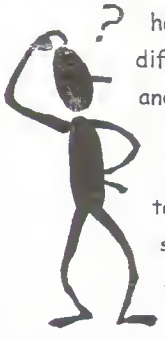
Levoillont's Cuckoo, NAIROBI ARBORETUM, Bernard Chege & N. Chege/Sept.

Lizard Buzzard, NGONG VIEW ROAD, Robert Entwistle/Aug.

Apology

In our September Newsletter Bird Hotline, we erroneously reported sightings of Black-backed Heron (Sangare Ranch) and Black-breasted Barbet (River Yala, Busia). We are still in the process of verifying the actual species that were seen. This will be reported in our November issue. We apologise sincerely for any inconvenience caused by these reportings.

HELP SOLVE THIS MYSTERY



Chris Chandler of Box 40536, Nairobi has observed a very different looking starling and has sent this 'Starling Alert!'- "people visiting Western Kenya, please take a careful look at any short-tailed Glossy Starling which you see. I have twice seen small, slim Glossy Starlings in the Eldoret area, with slimmer bills than either the Blue-eared Starling (ssp *cyaniventris*), common in Nairobi or even the Moshi birds (ssp *sycobius*). The first group was at the Nzoia River near Matunda, in April, and the again near Chepkoilel Campus, Moi University, on 15 August. They appeared to be much less glossy than Nairobi birds, also darker. Distinctive is the PURPLE flanks (as opposed to blue in the Blue-eared). I'm suggesting these Western birds are Lesser Blue-eared Glossy Starlings!"

SOCIETY NOTICES

Ornithology Department Seminar

THE SOLITARY GROUP LIFE OF A FRUGIVOROUS CARNIVORE - THE KINKAJOU IN PANAMA

Presented by: Dr. Roland Kaxs

Date: Wed, 6 October at 2.30 p.m.

Venue: NMK Seminar Room

Video/Slides oppeoll

We are appealing to members to help us develop a Nature Kenya video/slides library. Conservation and nature related slides (with a short description) and videos would really assist in promoting the Society's activities.

In one spirit we can build a strong conservation body.

World Birdwatch '99 'Hot cakes"

The 1999 World Birdwatch T-shirts are going like hot cakes at the Nature Kenya offices @ only 600/- Hurry now and grab one while stock lasts!

Special World Birdwatch Offer!

Posters on "Birds of Kenya" & "Birds of Prey" on sale for members at a reduced price of 125/- each. Available at the Nature Kenya Office

The.UNEP International Photographic Competition on the Environment 1999-2000, is still on. The theme this year is ***'Focus on your World'***. Write to UNEP HQs, P O Box 30552, Nairobi, Kenya for details. The closing date is 30 April 2000. Hurry now and you could be a lucky winner of a gold prize worth US$ 20,000!